

Your EAP|Here4TN! for you and your family

**PARTNERS
FOR HEALTH**
EMPLOYEE
ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM

Strive for emotional wellness and health

It is the middle of winter. While you might feel like doing little more than hibernating as the year begins, it can be a good time to assess and improve your emotional wellness.

When you are emotionally well, you can maintain the elements of good health. This includes having supportive relationships, keeping your emotions balanced, and facing life's challenges with resilience and a positive attitude. It means going about life with a sense of purpose, being flexible to adapt to new situations, and making room for fun in your life.

The beginning of the year represents an opportunity to consider these qualities and get off to a fresh, healthy start. Here are some ideas on how to do that:

- **Respond positively to challenges.** When a difficult circumstance arises unexpectedly, is your first reaction to view it negatively—to forecast gloom and doom? If so, try to change from being shocked to seeing the situation as an opportunity. Being emotionally well does not mean you will not experience problems; it means you have developed the internal resources you need to bounce back.
- **Connect with friends and family.** It does not help to keep problems to yourself, trying always to navigate difficulties on your own. Working things out with people you trust is healthier. Plus, it goes both ways: if you practice being a good listener, you will get support from others when you need it. Also be sure to take time with others to laugh out loud at life. It is one of the best ways to stay well!
- **Manage your time and seek balance.** Assess your schedule and decide if you are doing too much, at the expense of your own well-being. If so, start making small changes so you're able to do a bit more of what you value most.
- **Enhance your self-discipline.** Sometimes unhealthy habits creep into our lives. Look at behaviors that might be having a negative effect on you, and resolve to control or eliminate them.
- **Take time to stop and smell the roses.** Everyone is busy, but it is important to take breaks sometimes to appreciate the beauty all around us and cultivate a sense of gratitude.

It may be “bleak midwinter” on the outside, but on the inside you can focus on improving your emotional health and wellness. Getting to a good place with your emotions can help you kick off the year in a positive way.

In this issue we examine ways to develop and maintain a more optimistic attitude about everyday life. We offer ideas on how to adopt healthy emotional habits that can sustain you through challenges. There is also information about how regular exercise actively supports your emotional health.

Remember that if you or your family members need to speak to a counselor, your ParTNers EAP is available 24 hours a day. You can arrange in-person counseling, or confidential counseling by telephone if you would prefer. Just call **1.855. Here4TN (1.855.437.3486)**. The **www.HERE4TN.com** website also offers self-assessments, information about providers and community resources, educational webinars and podcasts, and much more.



How to build strong emotional habits

If you would like to be able to better handle life's ups and downs, developing a set of healthier emotional habits may help. Strategies such as staying balanced, managing stress and overcoming unhealthy habits can help keep you on track.

- **Strive for balance in your activities.** Keeping on an even keel can help you navigate better through life. Remember that both the big victories and the painful defeats in life can be valuable if you decide to learn from them rather than only responding emotionally. Also, even though you're busy, it's important to always seek a reasonable balance between your daily responsibilities and the things that bring you enjoyment. If you stay balanced, you will be able to handle challenges better.
- **Follow your own path.** Do not compare your life to others or try to be someone you think others expect you to be. It is easy to feel down when you think you are not as successful as others. Instead, consider what is truly important to you in life. Then take small daily steps toward reaching goals that are uniquely yours.
- **Work at managing your stress.** Stress can harm your physical and emotional health. Keep it controlled with stress management techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, progressive (deep) muscle relaxation, tai chi, guided imagery and/or exercise.
- **Shed destructive habits.** Perhaps you have been saddled with an unhealthy habit or two. Examples could include smoking, overeating, drinking, drug use, gambling or unhealthy relationships. If this is the case, make an effort to phase the activity out of your life so it does not affect your emotions and behavior. If any of these issues have become a problem for you, contact ParTNers EAP at 1.855.Here4TN(437.3486).
- **Try to let go of worry.** Life is full of circumstances we cannot control. If you are often worrying and having negative thoughts about the world and your situation, you lose time, energy and contentment. Better to let go of the many small annoyances in life and focus on what you can do to feel good today.
- **Establish a healthy routine.** Try to ensure you are eating a well-balanced diet each day with food from all the major food groups, and drink plenty of water. Also, try to get seven to eight hours of sleep per night, liven up your routine with a new type of exercise, and get as much winter sunlight as possible.



Creating and keeping a positive attitude

While you may feel that your personality is set in stone, you can change the habit of having a negative attitude about things into a positive one. This can help you feel more in control of life.

- When you are faced with a new situation, stop and try to turn off any negative "self-talk" if that is your typical reaction. Instead, try to foresee a positive outcome.
- Just because you woke up "on the wrong side of the bed" doesn't mean your entire day is lost. Sometimes the roughest of starts can lead to surprising successes.
- If you often emphasize your flaws, try to remember your strengths instead. Think of qualities like your technical skill, sense of humor, compassion, and willingness to help others.
- Focus on positive friendships. The company you keep can have a big effect on your attitude. Try to avoid people who are mostly negative.
- If you feel stuck in a rut, try something new. Take a class, volunteer with a charity, or plan a weekend getaway to an unfamiliar place. New experiences will refresh your outlook!
- Find yourself dealing with negative thoughts and cannot seem to shake them? Call ParTNers EAP in addition to looking at our online resources at www.Here4TN.com and clicking on the Member Resources link on the home page.



Did you know? Exercise boosts emotional wellness

Workouts work wonders. Did you know that regular physical activity improves your mood, helps relieve stress and depression, and increases feelings of well-being? Even though it is colder outside now, you can find fun ways to stay fit.

- When you exercise, your body releases chemicals called endorphins that trigger a positive feeling in the body and reduce your perception of pain.
- Good exercise can be as simple as walking. Many shopping malls have extended hours so people can do “laps” prior to the stores opening. Other walking options include indoor tracks at local gyms or public fitness complexes.
- Take vigorous outdoor walks. An outdoor winter walk can be stimulating. Just be sure to bundle up in layers so you stay warm, and wear reflective gear for safety if out after daylight.
- Set exercise targets. Improve your health by shooting for measurable, attainable exercise goals. Celebrate your successes!
- Your ParTNers for Health Wellness Program offers many resources to help help you get started. Go to partnersforhealthtn.gov and select the Wellness tab to learn more.

Make time to nourish yourself

Even if your schedule is hectic, include some self-care that feeds your emotional well-being.

- **Schedule daily “you” time.** Find at least 15 or 20 minutes every day to do something just for you. This can be a spiritual practice such as meditation or prayer, art or music appreciation, stargazing, a creative hobby, or whatever means a lot to you on a personal level. You deserve it!
- **Take breaks.** Even when you are deeply absorbed in a work task, take an occasional break to stand up, stretch and move. You do not have to go far, but your body and mind will appreciate a brief “unplug” once in a while.
- **Do some quiet one-on-one sharing.** Be sure to take a little undistracted time each day to share stories from your day over coffee or during rest and relaxation time with your spouse, significant other, or a good friend. This helps keep your relationship healthy, intimate and supportive.

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